

Tips for Starting a Book Study Group

1. Issues to determine before getting started

- How often will we meet and for how long?
- Where will we meet? Plan a comfortable location where educators can meet and sit in a circle to discuss the book. (A classroom may not be the best location.)
- Is there a “best time”?
- What do we serve for snacks? Plan and order food and beverages for the meeting. (Teachers are hungry after school!) Make arrangements for pick-up or delivery of the refreshments. Do not forget the napkins, plates, cups, etc. Consider sources for donation of the refreshments (parent groups, etc.).
- How will I invite participation? You may want to design an invitation to participate and send it to your intended audience. “Talk up” the book to invited participants, telling them how it has positively changed your thinking or classroom practices. Be sure to keep administrators informed about all you have planned.
- Meet with school administrators to remind them of the Master Teachers Project requirements. Ask for their support in publicizing and supporting the book study group.

2. Getting ready

- Form a list of participants from the returned invitations. Prepare a half-page flyer which contains the reading assignments, meeting times and dates, and the meeting place. Give this flyer (or another similar one) to participants several times during the course of the book study.
- Have all materials that will be needed (a book for each participant, highlighters, pens, sticky notes, chart paper, markers, etc.).
- Before the first meeting, be prepared by reading carefully and taking notes. Make a list of three to five basic questions. Re-read the first assignment in the book prior to the first meeting.
- Send out a reminder notice to all participants one week prior to each meeting.
- Arrive early, have the room set up, and make sure the refreshments are there.
- Have sign-in sheets ready at every meeting to record attendance. Keep all sheets for the final report to the Master Teachers Project.

3. Leading stimulating discussions

- Make everyone feel welcome and valued. Relay expectations (attendance, being prepared, participating in discussions, etc.). Have name tags ready, if participants do not know each other.
- Begin and end the sessions on time.
- Ask a participant(s) to serve as a recorder and timekeeper.

- Take a few moments to discuss the purpose of the book study group, the logistics, the requirements, and the rewards. Explain the “rules of engagement”- everyone’s ideas and comments are important, one person speaks at a time, cell phones should be switched to “silent” or “off,” etc.
- Ask basic questions. Be ready to develop the discussion in some depth by asking leading (thought-provoking) questions as well. Note that the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol book contains a summary and discussion questions at the end of each chapter. These may serve as guiding discussion questions, but groups are by no means limited to these suggestions.
- To help facilitate discussion, feel free to help group members expand their answers with such promptings as:
 - *“That’s an interesting observation. Tell us why you think that is true.”*
 - *“What statement by the author drew you to that conclusion? Let’s all look at that page in the book.”*
 - *“When have you seen that student characteristic in your classroom? How did you handle it?”*
 - Ask the participant to elaborate or explain more fully a previous comment, ask someone to restate the comment in a different way, or encourage participants to relate the contents to their own experiences.
- Get everyone involved. Each member should assume responsibility for the success of the discussion. Keep a seating chart or list of participant names; check off names of those who have asked questions or made comments to ensure that no one is left out. Book studies can include activities as well as discussion.
- Expect to encounter participants who are reluctant to speak as well as those who are very anxious to speak. Plan some strategies for refocusing and keeping the discussion “on track” and for soliciting ideas and comments from all participants. It is fine to ask if someone who has not spoken wishes to make any comments. If discussions veer off track, say that the discussion does not fit at that point and offer to discuss it after the meeting with anyone who is interested.

4. Last thoughts

- Close each session with a summarizing activity, question, or assignment.
- End each session at the designated time.
- Read with a purpose. Remember that the ideas presented in the book will benefit your school and your teaching experience. Record any ideas from participants for ways that could impact your school.
- Keep a list of good books for future studies.
- Send reminders before each subsequent study meeting.
- After all the book study meetings have concluded, conduct a written evaluation of the book study. Analyze the comments and report your findings to your administrators and/or the participants in the study. Report required evaluations to the Master Teachers Project leader. Award certificates to participants.

Discussion Starters

1. Talk about your assigned pages in your small group. Determine the main idea(s) or themes presented in the assigned section. Select a recorder to list all ideas. Choose what you think is the most important theme and explain to the group. (Allow participants to discover main themes and supplementary themes.)
2. Use the large chart paper and markers to summarize the main ideas and themes in any way you wish (words, pictures, charts); relay the main idea to the whole group. (Participants may use various formats to storymap the book or selected chapter.)
3. As you read the chapter, you will have questions. Jot the questions you have. Bring three of your questions to our next meeting for discussion. (Encourage participants to write questions while reading, as soon as they think of them.)
4. How does this book relate to your life as a teacher? Tell the group about those connections. (Encourage everyone to relate the book to their classroom or school in some way.)
5. Write on sticky notes all the things you have learned from reading this book. Then place each sticky note on the chart in the section you think it belongs. (Large chart paper can be divided into sections such as “Teaching Strategies,” “School Atmosphere,” “Learner Needs,” “Leadership Skills,” etc.)
6. What is your favorite quote from this section of the book? Read it to the group and talk about what it says to you. (Quotes can be collected, copied and later duplicated for everyone to have.)

Title of book:

After reading this section of the book:

I agree with the authors that . . .

I disagree with the authors that . . .

I have questions or am not sure about . . .

Name _____ Date _____

Book Study Group Log

Date _____ Start Time _____ End Time _____

Location of Meeting _____

Facilitator _____

Recorder _____

Attending Participants _____

Book _____

Key Discussion/Learnings _____

Classroom Applications _____

Date of next meeting _____

To do before next meeting

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Announcing Plato School's 2007-2008

TEACHERS' BOOK STUDY

The Learning Leader: How to Focus School Improvement for Better Results

By Douglas B. Reeves (2006)

Doug Reeves says that the quality of the professional development
is dependent upon what you do with it.

If teachers and administrators return to the classroom or school office from a
professional development experience and nothing happens,
then the "adult learning experience was nothing more than an illusion,
a mirage of improved practice in the middle of a desert of indifference."

Meeting Dates

Saturday, September 8	Chapters 1, 2, 3	Pages 1-64
Saturday, October 6	Chapters 3, 4, 5	Pages 65-97
Saturday, November 10	Chapters 6, 7, 8	Pages 98-142
Saturday, December 8	Chapters 9, 10, 11	Pages 143-198

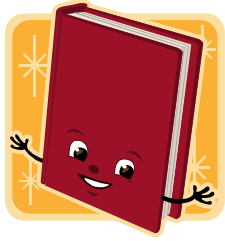
**Meetings will begin at 4:00 p.m. and end promptly at 5:30 p.m.
All meetings will be held in Room 270 of the Administration Building.**

Please send me an email message at < _____ > by Saturday, September 1 **or** return
the lower portion of this invitation to my mailbox if you are interested in participating, and I will
forward your book to you immediately.

Thanks!
Master Teacher
Plato Middle School

Name _____ School _____

**Yes, I am interested in participating in the book study and will attend all sessions.
Please send me my copy of the book, *The Learning Leader: How to Focus School
Improvement for Better Results.***



Reminder!

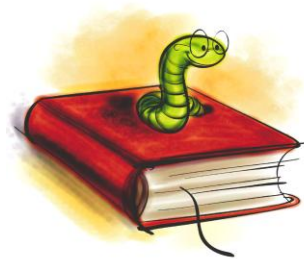
Book Study Meeting

Next Thursday, 4 p.m.

Administration Building, Room 270

Bring your book! Refreshments will be served!

Book Study



Meeting Dates and Times

Friday, September 7	Chapters 1-2	4 p.m., Room 270, Adm. Building
Friday, October 5	Chapters 3-4	4 p.m., Room 270, Adm. Building
Friday, November 9	Chapters 5-6	4 p.m., Room 270, Adm. Building
Friday, December 7	Chapters 7-9	4 p.m., Room 270, Adm. Building